

ORM NEWS

Office of Resolution Management
Department of Veterans Affairs



March 2005

From the Deputy Assistant Secretary



Complaint processing is the cornerstone of what we do in ORM. This is as true today as it was at ORM's inception in 1997. In accomplishing our mission of timely and expert processing of equal employment opportunity complaints, we have also taken steps towards becoming an "Employer-of-Choice."

I am often asked to describe what it means to be an Employer-of-Choice. While there are several answers to that question, I want to talk about what this means for ORM. My goal for ORM is threefold: (1) quality service, (2) employee satisfaction, and (3) how we can incorporate these two very important ingredients into what we do.

Becoming an Employer-of-Choice involves the development of a positive work place through employee involvement and management support. We have made strides in that direction by implementing a number of initiatives that have resulted in improvements in both the quality of our services to our customers and in the support we provide to our employees. They include:

- Implementing a Services and Resources Alignment (SARA) to improve our effectiveness.
- Developing training programs that address the primary competencies in our core positions. (Advanced Counselor Course, Advanced Intake Course Validation, Advanced Investigators' Course).
- Measuring the effectiveness of our services and developing corrective strategies to address weaknesses in our operations. (Quality Assurance Program).
- Improving services to our stakeholders and employees. (Electronic Case Management System, Call Monitoring, Ombudsman Program).

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- Enhancing feedback to and from our stakeholders and employees. (Customer and Employee Satisfaction Surveys).
- Recognizing the contributions of our employees through incentive awards. (Customer Service Award, ORM Employer-of-Choice Award, Investigator of the Month Award).

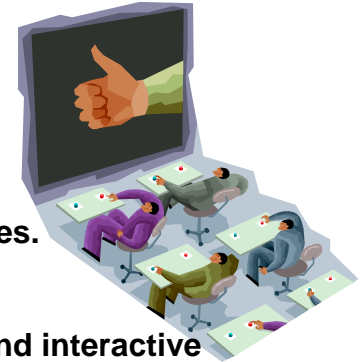
These initiatives are part of a larger framework that includes improvements in each component of our operations. Your support of our mission and active participation in these efforts are vital to the continued success of ORM. I want to take this time to, once again, compliment you on your hard work and to encourage you to continue to provide the best service that you can to both our customers and to ORM.

James S. Jones

Program Highlights

ORM Training Opportunities

Learning Resources has announced a number of new training opportunities for ORM employees. These courses are available to enhance your job qualifications and personal development. ORM employees are encouraged to take advantage of these training opportunities.



- **Mediation Refresher Training**
This training will include lectures, demonstrations, and interactive mock mediations and is scheduled for April 13, 2005, 1:00pm to 4:00pm (EST) via V-Tel.
- **HR Management Overview: Disciplinary Actions - Part 1**
This training provides an overview of Human Resources policies beginning April 17, 2005. Sessions will be conducted, via V-Tel, once a month for six months and is targeted towards EEO Counselors.
- **USDA Home Study Para-Legal Courses**
These courses are available to intake specialists and other ORM employees interested in obtaining Para-legal training. Registration can be done via the Learning Resources Web page.
- **VA Learning On-Line (VALO)**
Employees are encouraged to take advantage of the online training offered to all VA employees at VALO. A link to this resource and the catalog of available courses is available on the Learning Resources Web page.
- **Learning Resources Training Calendar**
Have you visited the Learning Resources training calendar lately?
Upcoming training includes:
 - Advanced Counselor Course – April 2005
 - Basic Mediation Training – April 2005
 - Advanced Investigator's Course (Tentative) – May 2005
 - Advanced Mediation Training, Little Rock, AR – May 2005

For more information visit Learning Resources' Web page <http://vaww.va.gov/orm/ormlr/Default.htm> or contact Lewis Henson, Learning Resources Officer.

Certified Mediators

Learning Resources has announced that 25 additional ORM employees have submitted applications to be certified as mediators. Certification of these additional employees moves us towards our goal of 10 percent of ORM employees being certified as mediators in fiscal year 2005. Currently, 2 percent of our employees are certified mediators.

Employees seeking additional information on certification can contact Learning Resources.

Customer Survey Distribution Process

ORM began surveying 100 percent of its customers involved in the EEO discrimination complaint process in October of 2004.

As a result of the feedback received from our customers in response to these surveys, the Customer Service Division has developed individualized presentations for each ORM Field Office. These presentations provide Field Managers with information on the number of surveys sent and returned by customers and overall satisfaction rates for their offices and individual core positions. Satisfaction ratings based upon responses to the survey questions and how field offices compared to other field offices were also provided in the presentations. General and specific recommendations were included to help improve the services provided to our customers.

This data will be used by field offices to monitor customer service, identify training needs, and make improvements as needed. This information can also be used to identify best practices in the field offices and to recognize employees who have provided good service to ORM customers.

For more information, contact Brenda Lewis, Customer Service Manager.

Office Notes



Federal Consulting Group

Representatives of the Federal Consulting Group (FCG) are conducting an assessment of ORM to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of our organization and services. Part of this process involves employee interviews. Interviews have been held with the DAS, COO, HR Manager, Acting EEO Manager for Mid-Atlantic Operations, employees in counselor, intake specialist, and investigator positions. The assessment process will continue until May 2005 and will include ORM field based employees, field operations, and stakeholders.

Upcoming ORM Managers Meeting

Dallas, Texas will be the site of the upcoming ORM Managers Meeting, scheduled for April 11, 2005 to April 15, 2005.



Government Service Recognition

Kathy Howse, Intake Specialist, 30 years of government service and **Eleanor Kaye Wilson**, Investigator, 15 years of government service, both with Mid-South Operations, were recently recognized for these milestones.

Mid-South Operations

In honor of Black History Month, Mid-south Operations staff participated in a month long Trivia Contest answering questions about Black History. **Billy Cantrell**, EEO Counselor, was the Facilitator of the questions. At the end of the month, **Lovetta Oring**, EEO Program Assistant, was the winner with the most correct answers. She was presented with a paperweight for her knowledge of Black History.

Great Lakes Operations

A note of thanks was sent to Great Lakes Operations by C. Charles Caruso, Assistant Regional Counsel, VA Regional Counsel's Office, MN. His note read, "Thank you very much for providing the ORM Investigative Files I requested through Deputy Assistant General Counsel Deborah McCallum. I received the materials in a timely fashion and was able to prepare a motion and submit it to EEOC Administrative Judge. The Administrative Judge ruled, refusing to consolidate for one joint hearing a case properly before the AJ, with one in which the Complainant had made a timely waiver of hearing and had requested a FAD, and another case in which the request for a hearing was about five and 1/2 months premature. Thank you all very much, *C. Charles Caruso*."

Did You Know?

MARCH IS NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

VA proudly joins the nation in celebrating National Women's History Month during March. This year's theme, "Women Change America," honors and recognizes the role of American women in transforming culture, history, and politics—as leaders, writers, scientists, educators, politicians, artists, historians, and informed citizens. It also celebrates the myriad ways in which the spirit, courage, and contributions of American women have added to the vitality, richness, and diversity of American life.

VA specifically recognizes the contributions of women who have served in the U.S. military and the women in VA who provide health care and deliver benefits to our nation's veterans. More than 58 percent of VA employees are women. Women's History Month provides an excellent opportunity to review VA's accomplishments in the employment and advancement of women and to recognize the vast resource women represent in the Department.

Managers and supervisors are encouraged to plan activities and initiatives during the month of March and throughout the year. For more information on Women's History Month, contact Wanda J. Jones, Federal Women's Program national program manager at 202-501-2089.

Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents

The 2005 edition of *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents* is now available on line. This booklet can be accessed through:

- (1) The Office of Public Affairs "Feature Items" page (<http://www.va.gov/OPA/feature/>) or
- (2) The "Current Benefits" link at the bottom of the VA Home page (<http://www.va.gov/>).

Web pages should link to <http://www.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf>.

The Spanish language version, *Beneficios Federales para los Veteranos y sus Dependientes*, will be available from the same locations as soon as the translation is completed.

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